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“What in the world do you think you are doing?” A cultural-historical and pedagogic approach to negativism in schooling.

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This paper considers the significance of negativism in classroom activity. I argue its potential as an irritant that provokes us to pay attention to the situation it expresses. Negativism is explored as a function of behaviour in cultural-historical theorisation of children’s development, drawing on Vygotsky’s work in child psychology. In post-Vygotskian research, the relationship between negativism, crisis, the social situation of development and activity setting is reviewed, ending with Hedegaard’s practice of the ‘double move’. The second half of the paper reflects on the author’s experiences and publications as a teacher, teacher-educator and researcher to portray methodological and practical pedagogic possibilities inherent in making double moves in response to negativism.

Key words: negativism, social situation of development, double move, pedagogy.

Introduction: the approach and the problem

Over the years, confusing fragments, lost corners of stories, have a clearer meaning when seen in a new light, a different place. (Ondaatje, 2011, 274)

The following discussion concerns the behaviour of adolescents in secondary school classrooms. This is the age-group (11-18 in the British education system) with whom I have worked for over thirty years. Throughout the 1980s I taught English language and literature in two comprehensive secondary schools in an ethnically diverse area of London with high levels of social deprivation – an activity setting for which I had been specifically trained at the Institute of Education of the University of London. From 1990 to 2012 I worked principally as a teacher-educator at the University of Bristol, guiding new practitioners towards their professional qualification and supporting their school-based mentors in the region. In both phases of professional life I have researched and written about classroom culture interaction using a range of cultural-historical and narrative methods of inquiry, which I currently teach at doctoral level.

I practised as a secondary school teacher during an era in which there was no prescribed national curriculum and far less regulation of teachers and interference by the state. Much of what I learned to do as a teacher in that particular inner-city setting has informed how I understand pedagogy in practice up to this day: it is a baseline social situation of development for me. I am historically practised at observing and developing pedagogy in classroom settings and I wish to draw on this history of experience. However, there is too much

to represent by giving a chronological account. Moreover, the lines of inquiry and the various arguments I was exploring at different times would come across as ‘fragments, lost corners of stories’ (Ondaatje, above).

This paper is both work in progress and a re-presentation: here I synthesise a larger body of work that explores interactive and intersubjective practices in school classrooms with a particular focus, which is to understand more of what Vygotsky (1998, 18) terms ‘negativism’¹. The commonly held perspective is that adolescents’ negativism is simply bad behaviour and oppositional to the proper activity of learning. To the contrary, I will argue, in line with Vygotsky (1998), Yaroshevsky (1989), Bozhovich (2009), Radzikhovskii (1987), Varenne & McDermott (1998), and Hedegaard (2004, 2012), that negativism is a constituent of developmental activity and learning and offers ‘a real, vital coincidence’ (Vygotsky, 1998, 16).

We need to understand better what is going on, what acts and displays of negativism mean, and their significance to the social relations of the classroom and the institution. I wish to show how acts and expressions of negativism have potential for the development of agency and understanding and are not simply insignificant and annoying distractions to learning. As teachers and educationalists we are fond of portraying pedagogical encounters in general and behaviour in particular in terms of positive and negative, as if charged with physical force like electricity, rather than charged with motive, feeling, significance and personality, as language and culture are. We also tend to leap to metaphysical and moral imperatives by equating negativism with “badness” and judging it. What happens if we dispel such other worldly affordances and suppose instead that such-and-such act of “bad behaviour” might denote in some way a constructive comment on the activity of teaching and learning? What happens if we ditch the good/bad, positive/negative dualism and detect what might be ontogenetic, dialogic and reciprocal clues in this puzzle of being and becoming that is schooling?

Why such a title to this paper? There is an expression in English, deployed reactively and rhetorically by teachers, parents and responsible adults when we encounter some individual or collective action by young people that interrupts our process: “What in the world do you think you are doing?” We seem to ask the question even though we know in part the answer because we have just witnessed the action that raises the question. My guess is that there are equivalent expressions to be found in schools in Brazil. Variants of this expression are probably as old and as widespread as formal schooling.

What is going on is instantly recognisable, not necessarily as a question in a semantic or syntactic sense, but as an utterance with particular functions in respect of an individual or group behaviour that runs contrary to the expected flow of teaching and learning. The force of the utterance is partly to rebuke and partly to draw attention to the behaviour that has arrested the pedagogical flow. Therefore whatever was done or said is revealed as an irritant to the normal process. For the most part, the asking of the question is purely symbolic, to draw attention to the irritation and therefore to subdue it with the hope of moving on in harmony.

¹ This is, of course, a translation from the Russian. Vygotsky also refers to the negative phase (1998, 16).

However, although that may close down and negate the initial negative action that causes the interruption, it doesn't explain the action – the potential of the original negativism has not been addressed, so it remains an irritant. Think of it like an insect bite that you stop to scratch, which affords temporary relief but doesn't cure the bite, so in a few minutes you stop to scratch all over again. In classroom activity terms the same parallel applies: the pedagogic process is stopped by the teacher calling attention to the interruption, which is supposed to quell the irritation, but doesn't cure the source of the problem, so a few minutes later the interruptive action is replayed.

The significance of an irritant was important early in Vygotsky's career in terms of the awareness he drew from literary criticism and reapplied in the study of psychological functions:

Any work of art is naturally regarded by the psychologist as a system of irritants consciously and deliberately organised in such a way as to produce an aesthetic reaction. In analysing the structure of the irritants, we reproduce the structure of the reaction. (Vygotsky, 1987, 40, in Yaroshevsky, 1989, 144-145)

In some respects I want us to think about incidents of adolescent behaviour as works of art, since they are often rather beautifully designed to produce a reaction. I suspect I have been considering adolescent utterance and classroom activity from both aesthetic and cultural-historical perspectives for many years, given that my earliest publication (Reed, 1986) looks at the multicultural implications of a piece of pupil's poetry I retrieved from the wastepaper bin of my classroom at the end of the lesson, and my most recent publication (Reed, 2012) is a fictional account of a difficult lesson written almost entirely in dialogue. There are other more traditionally empirical accounts of classroom interaction (Webster, Beveridge & Reed, 1996; Reed, 1999, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2008) that I will briefly revisit at the end of this paper. What links my inquiry is the move that Vygotsky describes above – that of taking apart what constitutes the 'irritant' in order to understand the cultural processes that might inform the activity expressed by that irritant.

An irritant has always been something produced in the classroom that sticks with me long after the attempt at correction (which in my experience usually fails), leaving me with questions, and in research terms, a quest. So, let me turn my title question back on itself as a question of what social knowing might be at play here – what in this world of schooling is being done?

An overview of cultural-historical perspectives on negativism

[W]e see inner discontent, anxiety, striving for isolation, self-isolation, sometimes accompanied by a hostile attitude toward those around. The decrease in productive activity, demise of interests, and a general anxiety constitute the main, distinct traits of the phase as a whole. The adolescent as if repels his² environment, that which was recently the subject of his interest; sometimes negativism passes more smoothly and sometimes it manifests itself in the form of disruptive activity. Together with subjective experiences (depressed state, repression, and melancholy revealed in entries in diaries and

² Vygotsky is drawing on an Austrian contemporary, Charlotte Bühler, who observes girls and boys, so we should think (as elsewhere) of the use of 'his' to reflect both sexes.

other documents that disclose the internal, intimate life of the adolescent), this phase is characterized by hostility and a tendency toward arguments and infractions of discipline. (Vygotsky, 1998, 18)

The concept and term, negativism, appears in both sections of Volume 5: Child Psychology of *The Collected Works of L. S. Vygotsky* (1998): ‘The first [section] contains about one-half of the chapters of Vygotsky’s book, *Pedology of the Adolescent*’ and the second ‘consists of separate articles which were published after Vygotsky died (Ratner, 1998, v). *Pedology of the Adolescent* (1930-31) was one of ‘a number of handbooks for correspondence courses’ (Vygotsky, 1998, 319) and the articles are drafts of chapters Vygotsky was preparing for a ‘book on child (developmental) psychology’ (1998, 329, 330) or stenographic transcripts of lectures delivered in the academic year 1933/34 (1998, 331 ff). Therefore, I suggest that these writings show the arguments regarding child development that Vygotsky was reaching towards the end of his life, and that they constitute a constellation of positions and ideas. The writings are written for different audiences and institutions in different cities³. The various mentions of negativism therefore open different perspectives on transition, crisis and development. In some instances Vygotsky is reviewing the literature extant at the time (predominantly that of W. Peters and C. Bühler); in others, he is reporting investigations and experiments carried out at the Experimental-Defectology Institute (Elkonin in Vygotsky, 1998, 298).

Two factors unite the writings: the objective that these are for pedagogical purposes; and their elaboration in terms of the co-constructive and social relationship between behaviour, personality, environment, maturation and mental development, all of which are unified in experience:

[I]n development, the unity of environmental and personality factors is achieved in a series of experiences of the child. Experience must be understood as the external relation of the child as a person to one factor or another of reality. All experience is always experience of something. There is no experience that would not be experience of something just as there is no act of consciousness that would not be an act of being conscious of something. But every experience is my experience. (Vygotsky, 1998, 294)

Here Vygotsky is thinking through in developmental terms the structural significance of the crisis in the seven-year-old child. Here is the frequently attested thesis of the intermental preceding and shaping the intramental, and here is the concurrent objectivism that relates experience to reality. Here, as well, is the suggestion that acts of consciousness are experiences in and of reality. And here, which is less usual in discussion of Vygotsky’s thinking, is the distinctive personalisation of experience, its autoethnographic quality, that gives individual character to people and lives: ‘every experience is my experience’.

Yaroshevsky (1989), in a little-known book, *Lev Vygotsky*⁴, published right at the end of the Soviet period, takes a biographical approach that links the development of Vygotsky’s thinking to his writings and the environments in which they were produced and which they reflect. Vygotsky does not begin his professional life as a psychologist, he becomes one. After graduating in law from the imperial university in Moscow in

³ The chapters in the handbooks are addressed to students corresponding through the Pedagogical Faculty of the Second Moscow State University (Vygotsky, 1998, 319), whilst the lectures were delivered at the A. I. Herzen Leningrad Pedagogical Institute (1998, 331)

⁴ My thanks to Harry Daniels for lending me his precious, tattered copy.

1917, at the outbreak of revolution and civil war, Vygotsky returns to his hometown of Gomel in the Ukraine and works as a secondary school teacher. In 1924, he moves back to Moscow and begins working 'at the People's Commissariat for Public Education' (Yaroshevsky, 1989, 98) with a responsibility for the legal protection of minors at a time when many children and young people were physically, emotionally and developmentally impaired and in crisis. Coming into an environment in which impairment and crisis were understood scientifically in abstract, general principles, as a teacher of young people with considerable experience already, including designing a radical curriculum involving both pedagogy and pastoral care, we should never underestimate how dynamic Vygotsky's school-based experiences became in the experimental and scientific work in psychology that follows:

The question might be asked, what was the connection between these abstract general problems and the things with which a teacher had to deal with on a daily basis as he taught a blind or deaf-and-dumb child? [...] Vygotsky pointed out [...] that their blindness or deaf-and-dumbness is not primary, since they are not felt to be disorders by the subjects themselves, but only secondary, as a result of social experience. A defect is, first of all, a social and not an organic abnormality of behaviour. (Yaroshevsky, 1989, 107)

Here is precedence for the participant-teacher-researcher and here is the potential for pedagogy to both inform and transform psychology.

Vygotsky (1998) introduces the negative stage of development in *Pedology of the Adolescent* in his discussion and critique of the 'structural psychology' of his time, that it 'does not consider the social, historical nature of human interests [...] nor does it consider the historical character of the new formations that might be termed interests' (1998, 11). Vygotsky is also criticising the tendency for psychologists to ignore 'changes and shifts in the areas of interests' (1998, 14) and consequently to address the mental development of the adolescent as a static, unchanging whole, with no marked difference in essence from early ages to adulthood:

In their opinion, there is simply a further improvement of the same apparatus, a further movement along one and the same line. (Vygotsky, 1998, 14)

Therefore, we need to understand negativism and the negative stage of development within an argument of dynamic developmental change which takes children's and adolescents' expression of their interests and their observed and reported behaviour as evidence of transition. Vygotsky refers to the 'ontogenetic plan' and makes:

a distinction between the social-cultural line in the development and formation of needs of the child and the adolescent and the biological line of development of his organic tendencies. (1998, 12)

Maturation is not conceived as a static whole but differentiated in terms of sexual and social maturation, such that phases 'during the period of sexual maturation are marked not only by a series of internal organic changes, but also by a reconstruction of the whole system of relations to the environment' (1998, 15). In *Pedology of the Adolescent* the first phase of negativism occurs around the age of three and the second is the adolescent phase, roughly between the ages of 14 and 18. In the transcripts of the lectures, Vygotsky

addresses specific ages in separate lectures as crises in development. In ‘The problem of age’⁵, he lists the ‘division of age into periods’ as follows:

- Crisis of the newborn.
- Infancy (two months to one year).
- Crisis at age one.
- Early childhood (one to three years).
- Crisis at age three.
- Preschool age (three to seven years).
- Crisis at age seven.
- School age (eight to twelve years).
- Crisis at age thirteen.
- Age of puberty (fourteen to eighteen years).
- Crisis at age seventeen. (Vygotsky, 1998, 196)

Across Vygotsky’s writings on child psychology, we encounter a proliferation of periods and crises. So we need to be careful and ask questions: firstly, concerning Vygotsky’s intention and main line of argument regarding transition and development (Blunden, 2008); and secondly, establishing what negativism might signify in this argument. One might also question whether the list ending at age of seventeen presumes that the achievement of adulthood marks a finite end to development? How many of us as adults have experienced times of crisis and negativism when struggling to find and maintain a lasting relationship, or to raise a family, or to secure or switch position or career, or to come to terms with a change or decline in health, body image or sexual appetite, or to live happily in an identity?

Vygotsky’s argument is stated in the opening sections of ‘The problem of age’ (1998, 198-199), which I summarise here. Every age period constitutes a unique relation, specific to the given age, between the child and reality, mainly the social reality, that surrounds him: the social situation of development at the given age. This situation offers the child the dynamic experiences (neoformations) that reform the child’s personality across the period, as the social becomes the individual. By the end of the period, the child’s structure of consciousness has changed how the child perceives reality, what one can do as activity and how one perceives one’s own internal life and mental activity. The child is a different child from that of an earlier age. Ostensibly, a new social situation of development has emerged, which forms the base of the next stage of development:

[T]he social situation of development which was established in basic traits toward the beginning of any age must also change since the social situation of development is nothing other than a system of relations between the child of the given social age and social reality. And if the child changed in a radical way, it is inevitable that these relations must be reconstructed. The former situation of development disintegrates as the child develops and to the same extent, with his development, a new situation of development unfolds in basic traits, and this must become the initial point for the subsequent age. (1998, 199)

What we need to concentrate on is the disintegration of the old and the emergence of the new situation of development, which is a new consciousness, new personality, new orientation and power in the world, new

⁵ Not published in Vygotsky’s lifetime, but one of the aforementioned chapters in draft for a book on child developmental psychology.

perception of the world from a new internal perspective on the world and oneself. Therefore, a revolutionary change, preceded by a crisis, is expressed by struggle.

With respect for the development of children into young people and adults through education, we can look back at Vygotsky's list and narrativise it further in terms of gain and struggle. There is the gain of the external world beyond the womb and the struggle to adapt to it, then the gain of mobility, the onset of language and consciousness and self. Then comes the gain of increasing independence from a caregiver and the expectation of self-regulation. After this the gain of schooling, the appropriation and struggle for mastery of new symbol systems and psychological tools like literacy and numeracy, and the struggle to sustain oneself in social collectives and institutions beyond the family. With the onset of puberty arrives the struggle to come to terms with a changing body and gendered self-and-othered-image. There is also a constant struggle with other-regulation at school and university expressed by competitive, systematised, academic and social assessments of attainment in concept, knowledge and practice. The worlds of education often feel abstracted from the way that understanding works out in the world of work, which seems visible yet unobtainable. Nowadays in modern economies increasing percentages of youth struggle for secure employment.

In Vygotsky's view, 'behind every negative symptom is hidden a positive content consisting usually in the transition to a new and higher form' (1998, 194). I think we have to pay attention to the insertion of 'usually' in that statement and its sociopolitical and socioeconomic significance, nearly a century after the Soviet revolution. This is where, perhaps, we might need to display some caution. A crisis, after all, can sometimes be critical and complete; in any social struggle some do not survive. Adolescents and young people today seem very aware of this social reality.

Vygotsky offers hope, and as a teacher, parent and grandparent I want to grasp for that hope:

Development never ends its creative work, and during critical periods too, we observe constructive processes of development. Moreover, processes of involution so clearly expressed during these periods, themselves are subordinate to processes of positive structuring of the personality, depend on them directly, and with them make up an indivisible whole. (Vygotsky, 1998, 194)

This leads me to my particular argument in this paper, that we need to look for 'constructive processes of development' within expressions and actions of negativism, since within such struggle and crisis are positive signs if we can but read them.

However, before moving on I want to review how some other researchers offer the debate regarding the significance of negativism.

L. I. Bozhovich (1908-1981) was a brilliant child psychologist and follower of Vygotsky's method (Robbins, 2004); she takes an important step from the ideas of environment and social reality we have already encountered to that of a child's position:

[I]n order to understand just how particular new traits form in children, a distinction must be drawn between the objective position children occupy in life and their own “internal position,” that is, how they themselves—due to the history of their development, which has given them a particular experience and particular traits—feel about everything around them and, first and foremost, about their position and the demands that it makes of them. Analysis of children’s objective position gives us an opportunity to understand the system of demands that the environment makes of them, while study of “internal position” allows us to understand the system of their own needs and impulses. (Bozhovich, 2009, 82)

The distinction between ‘objective position’ and ‘internal position’ must not be understood as two mutually exclusive positions in separate external and internal worlds, but in an opposite manner as distinctive yet related and reciprocal positions that express understanding of the social situation of development one is positioned in and the positions one has taken in one’s feeling about that objective position. This brings the person into subject position in relation to one’s objective position. It can also mean (‘analysis of children’s objective position gives us an opportunity to understand’), if we expand on the potential of that ‘us’, a range of perceptions regarding children’s objective position, including those of family, friends and peers, as well as professionals. Nor should we leave out all of these other people’s perceptions of children’s internal positioning.

As Bozhovich writes:

But the concept of activity cannot be divorced from the concept of position, since activity itself determines children’s position within the environment and is only a means for satisfying the needs associated with this position. (Bozhovich, 2009, 84)

What constitutes position is activity. This has powerful potential for teachers and our understanding of negativism and crisis, because it suggest both that we can help ourselves to understand such issues, and help the young person to understand, whilst drawing on the perceptions of a range of others to assist and voice that understanding. I would add, in line with Bozhovich’s position stated above, that the subject’s sense of internal position should carry equal weight in the balance of perceptions.

Activity is the key, since activity develops agency:

[T]he power of people to act purposively and reflectively, in more or less complex relationships with one another, to reiterate and remake the world in which they live, in circumstances where they may consider different courses of action possible and desirable. (Inden, 1990, 23, in Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 2001, 42)

However, as Radzikhovskii (1987) explores, the way in which individuals internalise and externalise social action is easy to assert and complex to explain, especially when one moves from a structural description of mechanism to a cultural-historical description of developmental process over time. What is internalised (and subsequently externalised) as a base structure is ‘joint activity’ between subjects orientated to each other and to social world objects through the play of signs. The various levels and degrees of difference of relation, experience and meaning that fuse (to create understanding) and then unfold (to express response) in every social and semiotic action of communication manifest restraint on ontogenetic development as well as affordance. Radzikhovskii (1987) borrows from Bakhtin (1979) the notion of the limits (boundaries,

finitude) of any utterance, so ‘limit’ is a powerful concept to express the restraints on development and agency through activity:

But the limit of a social act, its link to the act of another person, alters radically the entire system of the act and introduces a social element into its very definition. Hence, a sign must also occupy an important place in the structure of an act, i.e., a sign addressed to an “other” and eliciting an act in response that serves as the completion of that particular act. (Radzikhovskii, 1987, 95)

We need, therefore, to consider negativism in classroom activity closely in terms of the determinants of social reality that are presented. Bozhovich is directly relating activity to position in a determinant sense, such that the child’s activity is determined by and expressive of position. Radzikhovskii deconstructs activity in ontogenesis as a cultural-historical process to reveal its limits as well as its affordances. So the issue here is not to leap to common-sense and simplistic determinants, such as a child’s background, or social status, but to interrogate how a child becomes positioned and limited as a learner and as a person – not, therefore, what is the activity a child experiences and engages in, but what is the activity of positioning and limitation that is taking place?

The classic text of classroom ethnography that seeks to understand the activity of positioning is Varenne and McDermott’s *Successful Failure: The school America builds*:

It is not so much that culture determines individual behavior as it arranges for the situated interpretation of behaviour. (Varenne and McDermott, 1998,122)

Again and again Varenne and McDermott and their co-researchers observe, witness and unpick how various children position themselves relationally to peers and adults and acquire a disability or competence or capacity accordingly. Children are enculturated with disabilities because of immediate and wider cultural forces. These are the professional gazes of teachers and psychologists, the social ambitions and influence of parents, the authors and instigators of curriculum and examination, and the national narratives that define (and therefore limit) the opportunities afforded by an education.

Poddiakov (2005) argues that education is not necessarily benign and improving and that cultural activity is both progressive and restrictive:

The idea of complex relations between stimulation of development and its inhibition, and advantages and detriment caused by certain types of social interactions in teaching/learning (Poddiakov, 2005, 228)

Hedegaard (2012) points out the multiplicity of social situations of development that can arise in a single activity setting like a classroom or lesson:

Activity settings are not the single person’s settings, but an activity setting is conceptualized as societal traditions realized within an institutional practice as concrete historical events. Seen from a specific person’s perspective, an activity setting is a person’s social situation. Different persons in the same activity setting can experience different social situations (Hedegaard, 2012, 132)

These necessary complications of our conceptualisation of activity, in terms of relation, position and setting, help both to problematize aspects of Vygotsky’s heritage – for example, the simplistic abstraction of the

zone of proximal development (Chaiklin, 2003) that renders pedagogic practice almost meaningless – and to extend it.

For our purposes of understanding negativism in adolescents' development, Hedegaard makes the important link between crisis in a life and contradictions in motives in an activity setting:

Crises in children's life can then be seen as something necessary, reflecting contradictions between a child's different motives or between a child's motives and the institutions or another person's demands (Hedegaard & Chaiklin, 2005; Hedegaard, 2011). Crises can become detrimental if the caregivers do not support the child's capabilities to move forward to new motives and competences. Development is more than learning new competencies or acquiring new motives. Development can be seen when children's social relations to other persons are reorganized in *all* the different practices the child attends. (Hedegaard, 2012, 136-137)

A crisis is an extreme phenomenon, and we should be cautious in assuming that all expressions of negativism are acts of crisis, since clearly they are not. Young people, like adults, however, are just as capable of hiding upset as we are capable of employing it for effect, so there are many problems with any neat and easy equation of negativism with crisis. If crisis is an inevitable concomitant of the development of social being then what it signals, and what negativism signals, are feelings of limitation in terms of ability to act: the very expression of contradiction in the immediate social situation and relations in which a person is inscribed. In Hedegaard's words above, 'crises can become detrimental', which is not the same statement as 'all crises are detrimental'. What makes the difference is to 'support the child's capabilities to move forward to new motives and competences'. I want to stress how Hedegaard predicates 'the child's capabilities' here, which is to say that this whole cycle of expressed negativism and the possibility of response is fruitful only in terms of re-engagement of the person with the activity of the moment in its setting with a progressed sense of agency. This underlies Hedegaard's pedagogic practice of the 'double move' (2004, 30).

What Hedegaard practises as the 'double move' is not exactly what I practise. My purpose is not to appropriate that practice and reapply it but to understand its significance in terms of what it arises from in developmental terms and how it motivates a pedagogical response to an expression of negativism. I do want to draw attention to the sense in which such a move doubles back to revitalise the developmental contradiction being expressed. The 'double move' is grounded on reinvesting activity with agency, not rewarding or punishing behaviour.

Long ago, A. R. Luria, reporting research in collaboration with Vygotsky, denied the efficacy of the two most prevalent responses to negative behaviour in children: the idea that an individual can correct their attitude by will-power alone (in English the exhortation to a school pupil would be, "Get a grip!" or "Sort yourself out!"), and the idea that behaviour can be changed by punishment or reward. In the first instance, Luria (1932/1960, 401) writes:

Many observations support our view that the consideration of the voluntary act as accomplished by "will-power" is a myth, and that the human cannot by direct force control his behaviour any more than "a shadow can carry stones."

In the second instance:

In order to introduce in the child maximum motives it is only necessary to offer rewards or threaten punishment. These are methods of the old school of pedagogy. They have both been used in our experiments, without perceptible results.

[...] Such stimuli increased the motives of the child, but there was no improvement in his actions. The comparatively slight improvement seen in a few of the subjects could be attained without rewards or punishment, but by using other motives, such as competition, or by having the child give his attention to the experiment. (Luria, 1932/1960, 405)

Let us note in the first instance the importance of some mediating influence in the shape of word or sign as a tool by which we control our behaviour, and in the second instance the similar mediation of motives translated into action. This points to the important conclusion for pedagogical development that any activity has the potential to answer its own problems – that negativism is an affective expression of overlooked yet burgeoning agency. A child doesn't behave appropriately during one of Vygotsky and Luria's experiments, so what do they do? Have the child 'give his attention to the experiment' – that is, include him in the motivation to experiment. This is the essence of reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) and the making, in Hedegaard's terms, of a 'double move':

The change in view from the child as a recipient in learning situations to the child as a participant in learning, and the change in view from learning as a cognitive process to an activity leads to new forms of teaching practice. Each child becomes involved in a reciprocal process in which his/her motives and personality plays a part in the interaction with the other persons in the classroom – the teacher and their classmates. This has to be considered in teaching. The problem is then to create classroom teaching for the whole group of children, a problem that is possible to solve through children's cooperation in investigation of problems that are both interesting for the children and relevant for the subject matter area taught. (Hedegaard, 2004, 30)

The practice of the double move

The decisive factor, the end-all and the be-all of the whole process, is practice. It is part and parcel of psychological cognition, not just a verification tool. (Yaroshevsky, 1989, 179)

Interactions between teachers and learners can well be described as 'a drama taking place between people' (Vygotsky, 1983, 145, in Radzikhovskii, 1987, 92), or in dance terms as a *paso doble*. Occasionally, during my activity in classrooms, someone, maybe a pupil or student, colleague or co-researcher, has asked: "Why did you do that?" This has engaged me in dialogue over time with actions I have taken, often in the face of some negativism presented in the activity setting. In a reflexive sense I suggest that such interrogation opens the possibility in research practice of a double move, because it invites us to think about and unpick the pedagogic practice and the negativism to which one is reacting, whilst keeping the matter open and as-yet-unfinalised in Bakhtin's terms (1986). This is the work of deconstruction:

by means of a double gesture, a double science, a double writing [...] in overturning and displacing a conceptual order, as well as the nonconceptual order with which the conceptual order is articulated (Derrida, 1991, 108).

Therefore, the first double move I wish to point out precedes our arrival at pedagogic practices because it is born out of the reflex one creates with one's experiences in pedagogic practice: one has to ask the question how one has overcome successfully some incident of negativism?

An example of someone doing exactly this comes not from my own practice but from that of the celebrated French writer and former teacher, Daniel Pennac. It captures beautifully a profound issue and has provided me with food for thought ever since I read the English translation when it was published in the UK in 2010.

There are two common French expressions of adolescent discontent: "Je n'y arriverai jamais," ("I'll never get there!") and "Je m'en fous," (roughly translated below as, "I don't give a toss," and "I'm not bothered about it.") What Pennac draws attention to is what he calls (2010, 93) 'these mysterious agents of disembodiment', signified by the pronouns 'y' (there) and 'en' (of it). In Pennac's vignette of a lesson in which he was the teacher he asks the learner who doesn't answer his question except to exclaim, "Je n'y arriverai jamais!" to write the expression up on the board. The "lesson" here is partly linguistic, to interrogate the grammatical working of the present indicative, and partly existential, to interrogate the ontological significance of these 'agents of disembodiment':

"Good. So what's this *there*, in your opinion?"

"Dunno."

"What does it mean?"

"Dunno."

"Well, we've really got to find out what it means, because it's this *there* that's frightening you."

"I'm not frightened."

"You're not!"

"No."

"You're not frightened of not getting there?"

"I don't give a toss."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Whatever. I'm not bothered about it."

"Can you write that on the board?"

"What, 'I'm not bothered about it'?"

"Yes."

Im not bovered about it.

"*I* apostrophe *m*. And you might like to replace that *v* with a *th* – that's more like it."

I'm not bothered about it.

"Good. What about this *it*, while we're at it, what is this *it*?"

"..."

"This *it*, what is it?"

"Dunno, do I... ? It's – *all that*!"

"*All that*? Meaning what?"

"Everything that bugs me!" (Pennac, 2010, 91-93)

"Everything that bugs me!" Pennac is pointing us to an interior state within our social world in which, 'Swallowed up by *there* and *it*, we don't know who we are any more' (Pennac, 2010, 97). Perhaps this is a state of anomy? Anomy derives from a Greek root-word, 'lawless', and one of its earliest written usages in

English has the connotation of ‘disorder, doubt, and incertaintie over all’⁶. If anomy is an object of the mind, formed by a subjective state experienced in and made significant by the social situation of the activity setting, then such statements of “not getting it” and “being fed up with it” are palpable reflections of existence, of ontology. This is where and how this youth is, in this moment in this situation – living disorder, doubt and uncertainty. What Pennac does is to draw out the ‘agents of disembodiment’ from their different but joined semiotic bases – as syntactical and as ontological signs. He gives these feelings and positions body and presence and significance, and he reinvests them with the power of a school subject (here French language) and motivates investigation. I find the whole practice breathtakingly moving.

So the double move that Pennac teaches us is to deconstruct the expression of negativism when we witness it. In doing so, Pennac reminds us that ontogenesis concerns the development of social being and social consciousness of being, and utterance reflects these struggles and crises of being, if one opens out the utterance instead of closing it. The reflex Pennac works is with the double potential of an utterance to express how being figures in speech. This is much the same as Radzikhovskii’s (1987) argument noted previously. We should also note the state of negativism that figures in Pennac’s example. There is a world of difference between someone saying, “I don’t get it,” and “I’ll never get it.” The first negativism is bounded by the present tense and the second is inflected to the future; in the first the utterance of the problem is relatively finalised simply as a problem which isn’t being understood, whereas in the second expression the utterance is unfinalised and the state of being and understanding is never attainable. Pennac’s double move recognises the hopelessness of the infinite state and restores some finitude: giving boundaries to the ‘it’ is like shaping a door to allow a being to come through.

The problem with pedagogic moves is that some seem to work as double moves and some very clearly do not. This became apparent to me as a young researcher many years ago. In 1991, when we began our pilot observations of literacy interactions in primary and secondary schools that eventually became written up in *Managing the Literacy Curriculum* (Webster, Beveridge & Reed, 1996), one particular incident sparked our invention of a theoretical framework of literacy interaction that eventually distinguishes four quadrants of mediation between teacher and learner (see appendices, 169-179):

One of our target pupils decides that the piece of writing he is undertaking requires some conference with the teacher. It is an English lesson and the teacher is busy conferencing elsewhere. Two researchers are in the room. The Year 7 class (11-12-year-olds) have been shadowed for two days and have started to become familiar with the observers. Seeing himself the focus of the video camera’s attention, the learner seems to understand that an unspoken dialogue is already happening between the camera operator/researcher and him, so he gets out of his chair and starts up a conversation with this adult (Reed). The supposedly detached observer has been reconstructed as a potential teacher or assistant: a zone of proximal development is being opened. Perhaps the adult should have backed out of the zone by telling the boy to go away, but the adult is an English teacher with years of classroom experience and research objectivity bites the dust. (Reed, 2006b, 42)

⁶ Anomie as a sociological term was introduced by Durkheim in the late nineteenth century, but the word is much older. See "anomy, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2014. 1591 W. LAMBARD *Archion* (1635) 120 That were to set an Anomy, and to bring disorder, doubt, and incertaintie over all.

I looked at the boy's writing about a television news item and saw immediately that it had no punctuation or paragraphing, so I suggested that he drew a pencil line around the actual news item and separated it from the preamble. Then I invited him to start identifying the boundaries of sentences in his writing and rehearsed with him the traditional start/end markers of sentence boundary in English – the capital letter and the full stop. Then I sent him back to his desk to mark up some boundaries. Soon after the boy sat down his proper teacher became available and so the boy requested another conference, in which the teacher systematically corrected in red pen all the spelling and punctuation mistakes in the opening of the writing.

Clearly two completely different moves have taken place here, the difference being that one teacher passes on a strategy that the learner can activate and gives the learner an opportunity to apply the strategy whilst the other teacher closes down the learner's potential to expand their learning.

This particular incident, and all the analytical work that followed in order to propose and describe the different modes of mediation between teachers and learners (see Webster, Beveridge and Reed, 1996), continued to bother me – thus acting as an irritant and provoking the need for some double move in reflex – long after the book was published. The problem was that, even though we had identified a particular mode of mediation in which teachers and learners shared understanding of how literacy conventions and practices work, which we termed dialogic literacy, its incidence in pedagogic interactions was occasional. Furthermore, as a mode of pedagogy it was relatively unpractised and unconsidered – neither teachers nor learners recognised it as a mode. This made me consider the way practices are enshrined in rules in classrooms. My double move as a teacher-educator-researcher was to suggest that the rules that teachers and learners need have to attend explicitly to the behaviour of teaching and learning – the rules of joint activity:

In most classrooms there are rules of some form or another but they rarely explain how learning happens, rather they explain what the institution requires as acceptable behaviour in order for learning to begin: don't talk when the teacher is talking; bring the right equipment for the lesson; don't fight or swear; don't eat during lessons - and so on. These rules offer teachers and learners little in the way of guidance when it comes to orientating oneself to the nature of learning through interaction with others, so it is not surprising that shifts in the quality of interaction are highly contested by some learners - they are not aware of the nature of teaching and learning through interaction so they treat disciplinary measures by teachers as unfair assessment based on the exercise of brute power, rather than dialogic explanation. Without an explicit framework that orientates everybody to the conventions of teaching and learning, pupils who contest disciplinary measures are right to do so since they know that they are operating against the normative conventions but they don't know what those conventions are. Not knowing what comprises the rules one is breaking makes it very hard to choose or be persuaded to reorientate one's behaviour. (Reed, 1999, 10)⁷

I developed further frameworks that tried to expand the modes in the quadrants (Webster, Beveridge and Reed, 1996) into conventions of mediation that could be discussed and practised (Reed, 1999). However, I

⁷ This paper was translated into Danish for the chapter cited in the list of references. Page numbers therefore refer to the original, which is not published in English. Please contact me at Malcolm.Reed@bris.ac.uk for a copy of the English original.

do not want to repeat them now but re-present some of the ideas synthesised in relation to my consideration of the double move as a pedagogic move.

What empowers a pedagogic move has to do with the quality of response in any engagement between people. Negativism expresses that a state of being and understanding in one of those people is not yet present, not yet secure in the determinants of the problem, not yet sure of the sense of self that will carry the problem forward, and not yet capable of knowing what to do and what to try out. A double move will try to double back in a reflex on the problem expressed in the negativism and reveal the inherent objects of being and understanding as having potential for action, then help motivate that action towards finitude through joint activity that scaffolds individual activity within the setting. If the move does not attempt this then it probably is not a double move because no reflex is gained on the problem or the negativism it expresses.

Notice that I am consistent with Radzikhovskii's (1987) attention to engagement between people, so I am deliberately avoiding the status-words "teacher" and "learner" for reasons that will become clear. The person to whom the problem is addressed can act in a number of ways:

1. scaffold a move that brings the as-yet-unfinalised problem into the present and opens some door in it,
2. colonise a move by solving the problem and expecting the method of solution to be imitated,
3. moralise in a move that judges the problem in terms of right or wrong,
4. abdicate by passing the problem on to someone else,
5. deny the problem and thereby ignore it.

All of the actions I have described can be observed in any activity setting, not just those of schools. Only the first is a double move, since only the scaffolding move refigures what is problematic and acts reciprocally alongside it to initiate with the person who is experiencing the problem activity that is designed to allow the person to redesign their experience through potentially successful experience.

The different qualities of action propose my conviction that being a "teacher" and being a "learner" has nothing to do with who is the adult or who is the qualified professional and everything to do with who aligns their relation to an other in a manner that is adaptive of experience and constructive of agency (Reed, 1999). Learning and teaching is an exchange of agency within the labour of joint activity.

The following extract captures how I was thinking about this labour of agency in classroom terms:

In the welter of competing demands in a writing classroom, one-on-one interactions are time-consuming. In a setting in which a teacher serves twenty-five or more learners, individual needs are not met. Responding formatively and dialogically to learners' scripts is a tough objective. The nodal problem is the singular embodiment of expert agency in one person, generally the adult in the room. We need to consider strategies that distribute agency. Learners' interactions with each other have as much dynamic potential as those between the teacher and the group or whole class. The important questions are those the apprentices learn to ask each other and themselves, for it is there and then that agency is empowered (Brown & Palinscar, 1989). Develop appropriation of what is appropriate to need. (Reed, 2004, 32)

In this paper from 2004 and the one that followed in 2005, my research objects (those social world objects that I was exploring) were no longer observations of classroom interactions but examples taken from a collection of my own pupils' writing I photocopied across the 1980s. I was interested in the qualities of response necessitated by various writings, particularly when my pupils had drawn powerfully on their different cultural heritages by writing in character in dialect.

The connection with negativism in these writings needs articulating more clearly here than I managed to do at the time. The issue is one of cultural negativism, since I was aware that my pupils possessed linguistic and cultural resources that mainstream education tended to ignore or actively deny, since the requirement was (and still is) that writing the English language reflected standard written English and that the literature studied for examination was classic English literature. I was working in a predominantly multicultural setting in which learners could not appropriate what they needed in order to develop from these normative resources their own "tongues" in their own identities⁸. Therefore, the negativism learners experienced sometimes had to do with the monocultural limits and restrictions being placed on their potential to express agency from diverse positions and perspectives.

I could see that my pupils produced much more purposeful and animated writing when I found ways of deconstructing cultural negativism by engaging with literature and writing tasks that deliberately empowered and positioned non-standard English beside standard English, when, for example, a character uses their own idiom through direct speech in a story or playscript, which we could explore in exemplary literary texts and also produce as our own writing in classroom and for homework. I say "our" because I often wrote alongside my pupils doing the same tasks.

At the time of teaching in the 1980s, I was well aware that this double move in relation to cultural negativism produced good pedagogic results in terms of written products. Twenty years later when I was writing about these products (Reed, 2004, 2005), an influential British educationalist was suggesting that practitioners needed to take on board his version of dialogical pedagogy, which seemed to assert the relevance of Vygotsky and Bakhtin without actually explaining it: a classic case of colonising theory. I was also irritated that this pedagogy should be proposed as new, when I knew that there was a long tradition of it in British education and elsewhere in the world that predated my career and had been well voiced in my own education as a teacher (Freire, 1974; Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod & Rosen, 1975). You might say I was piqued by a negativism and needed to make a move to understand it. I was beginning to read Bakhtin (1986) alongside Vygotsky (1978, 1986) and tease out the difference in pedagogic moves between what is 'dialectical', 'dialogical' and 'dialogic':

⁸ See extract from Reed, 2012 later in this paper for the deliberate play of meaning in terms of body, language and cultural heritage in the idea of "tongue".

I want to argue that a dialogic literacy pedagogy constitutes rather more than a teacherly openness to engagement in dialogue with learners, which I would term merely dialogical. Dialogical pedagogy emphasises the linguistic form of dialogue; dialogic pedagogy emphasises the communicative relationship that empowers acts of dialogue.

Perhaps I should explain this difference in terms of the teacher–learner relationship. In a dialectical relationship, the teacher and the learner are imagined in a tension of opposition that seeks resolution or synthesis through discussion. In a dialogical relationship, the teacher and learner approach their dialectical difference through forms of dialogue that attempt to resolve difference. In a dialogic relationship, teacher and learner recognise that difference is productive and distinguishes one point of view from another—dialogue exists because of difference. Talking to and listening to the other synthesises the relationship whilst respecting difference. As a teacher, I am not the same as my pupils, and I will never become the same; our relationship is founded on difference. Dialogic pedagogy acts with a respect for learning from difference. (Reed, 2005, 88)

My point is that difference is productive in pedagogic practice if we can work its potential as utterance – not through a dialogue necessarily, but as a dialogic act in which the learner’s experience of difference and means of expression of that experience is respected, thereby taking on an agential prerogative. The teacher is being taught by the pupil’s experience and becomes a learner; the pupil teaches the teacher what he or she (the pupil) needs. Here is a *paso doble* in pedagogic agency: a dance and drama of double moves.

In a further development, between 2003 and 2006 I was invited to work with the staff of a London comprehensive secondary school for one week each year with the express purpose of helping teachers in a range of school subjects to explore the interactive practices of their teaching. I worked inside their lessons, looking specifically at classroom interactions and trying to understand the different moves that learners were making. I became interested in counteractions in which learners did not do what the teacher required.

In 2006 I took a video recorder and set it up in the corner of the classroom. During one lesson (the second in a series of three) I watched the pupils acting out a range of counteractive strategies whilst the teacher waited for them all to pay attention and listen to task instruction. The pupils played the waiting game brilliantly, finding all kinds of diversions, such that the task ended up being started and stopped periodically until it was so attenuated as a process that some learners were just beginning as others were completing. I asked to teach the next phase of the task. The pedagogic move I made was not to wait for the learners to accede to an impossible state of quiet attentiveness and then to take on board the task instruction, because this wasn’t going to happen however long I waited. I started distributing the activity by rapidly moving around the classroom modelling what to do and checking that small groups were listening and following, doubling back repeatedly to check that they were engaging with and then engaged in the task. Then I began to move them forward by sharing the next move, often by drawing specific learners’ attention to what others were doing. This is a method of distributing agency by distributing activity:

The opposite of attempting to draw the learners into the activity route the teacher wants is to wrap the activity around the learners by distributing agency – by activating activity. This is a strategy founded on sharing and empowering agency, in which teaching-and-learning is a mediated and cooperative activity of practical and supported excursions into the know-how and can-do of scientific and semiotic processes. Distributing agency means making actual excursions to align task instructions with each learner’s actions. [...] This distributive style of task management allows teacher (now the

researcher) and learners to engage in rapid, situated and personalized instances of conferencing, scaffolding, monitoring, checking expectations and praise giving. Learners are not addressed as separate from the collective, but as subordinate yet agential within collective activity. (Reed, 2008, 202-203)

My double move in research terms is to propose that all social activity in a classroom setting reflects learning. Behaviours are intrinsically social activity. What is traditionally considered to be off-task or counteractive behaviour is therefore learning and points to and opens up further pathways for learning. My argument has progressed in thinking that when learners are acting against the teacher's lesson then they are appropriating some of the teacher's agential power and employing it to signal their preferred version of activity. Such an appropriation is an agential act by design. So, here I am beginning to think of negativism as agential activity with a deliberate design.

If the expression of negativism is designed and agential then one pedagogic move that doubles back to open up the space to explore the negativism's significance is to invoke it – to summon it and call it in to the immediate present and ask what in this social world it is doing. I used to do this as a secondary school teacher, when a lesson was going badly and behaviour was beyond my comprehension. I would give a homework or start the next lesson by asking everyone without identifying themselves to reflect on paper what went wrong, why it went wrong and what we should do about it. I could then summarise and reflect back what we thought and how we thought we should move forward constructively. This was always a powerful invocation of collective agency.

I have written up this move in a short story, published in an academic journal (Reed, 2012). The short story form allows me to draw on previous experience and narrativise it, in what I have argued (Reed, 2011) is a practice of fictional ethnography. The teacher in the following extract is a fictional version of myself. To show how little the teacher speaks, his words are marked in italics. At a moment when a crisis has built up in the lesson, the teacher invites reflection and consequently enraged wisdom tumbles out:

"So what's going on right now?" the teacher asks, quietly.

"You lost control of the lesson—that's what's going on, to tell the truth, sir!"

"Thought we was supposed to be studying English literature, anyway! Thought we was going to be starting a set text this lesson—not chatting all this rubbish about fables and stuff..."

"WHY DON'T YOU ALL JUST PACK IT IN?"

"Thank-you, Wai-Hung," says the teacher.

"Well, it pisses me off, sir—the same old crap, every day. Half the class actually tries to have an adult conversation and the other half sits on their arses just... finding fault!"

"Yeah but sir never does nothing when it goes too far—that's all we're saying. Like with Terry..."

"JUST GROW UP!"

"Don't you start too, Tasha! Anyway—you ain't one of them, you're supposed to be one of us."

"I don't belong to nobody. I might hang around with you but I don't have to do what you lot say. Anyway I'm fed up acting all negative all the time. We could leave school in two years' time, so we should be acting more like we're old enough to look after ourselves."

"Can we just get on with the lesson now, sir? I mean, can we?"

"But he's asking us a question—what's going on, right now? Like analyse what's happening. Between us."

"Yeah, but Wai-Hung, that isn't English—that's not what we are supposed to be doing!"

“But it is what we’re supposed to be doing! Talking about stuff to do with English. Having an opinion.”

“Why can’t we watch a film or something—what’s so special about talk, anyway? That’s so old-skool and boring. Sir should use the interactive whiteboard more like other teachers do.”

“Tasha’s right, you’re still children. ‘Slike your life is some kind of TV programme an’ all you got to do is criticize or change the channel when you’re bored. You expect sir to keep you entertained and feed you what you got to think! And as soon as anyone dares you to stretch your mind and produce you sulk like your mum asked you to make your own tea or something.”

“Yeah—we’re the producers in this class—you lot are consumers. You should pay us for our opinions—the fruit of our labour—we’re the workers round here and you all are just redundant!”

“Speech, man—true speech.”

“I’m not saying different from Charmaine or Tasha or Wai-Hung. Words do work just like hands.”

“You should learn to chill, Devon—all you keeners trying to sweet-talk sir. Showing off how much you love English...”

“This ain’t just about English—this is about ideas. You don’t say anything ‘cos you can’t be bothered to think. All you want is to copy down the answers off the board, or listen in to us and use our ideas like they’re your own...” (Reed, 2012, 146-147⁹)

Such situations are not limited to adolescents. One week recently, I was teaching a doctoral class on research methods over three days and some direct negativism regarding drawing as a method of data collection in visual inquiry was expressed after we had experimented with recording non-verbally a visit to an art installation in the city museum across the road from my workplace. I found myself doing exactly what the teacher does in the extract above. There was a big argument about the significance of data, which I kept out of for the most part except to point to the problem. In the post-teaching feedback most participants referred to this incident as pivotal in expanding their understanding of data. The person who expressed the greatest negativism was still angry about the double move I had made. I am still thinking about the significance of this anger.

And just recently I returned to a secondary school for a week, to establish a new classroom-based research relationship that I hope to extend over the coming academic year. My express purpose is to attend to negativism. During the week a class that I was due to observe started with me in the teacher’s role because their teacher was delayed by a traffic problem on the way to work. The difficulty I had in summoning up any interest in starting the lesson was tremendous – my agency counted for very little. The teacher arrived after five minutes and we agreed to continue teaching the lesson together. After about twenty minutes over which slowly I was included a little more by the young people as someone who might have something to offer, I was dramatizing a key passage projected on the interactive whiteboard from the play they were studying, activating different people to take different critical positions. The class seemed to be with me – we seemed to be engaged in a shared utterance. Then right in the middle one young person started a loud conversation about something that was nothing to do with the lesson with her friend about three metres away, completely oblivious of me. I stopped in full flow, looked at her, and said, “What in the world do you think you are doing?” She ignored me. Everyone was watching. I kept looking at her. She said, “I’m not doing anything,” and looked at her friend, who laughed out loud. I said, “You are being embarrassing – that’s what you are

⁹ I have made a slight alteration to the published original to make clear when the teacher speaks.

doing, both of you. This is just embarrassing.” Many of the class nodded their agreement. The two girls stopped talking and looked embarrassed. The lesson continued. In my mind, the learning always continues.

Conclusion

If negativism has a design and is intentional on the side of the person who expresses it, then it offers a potential opening for a double move because we can double back to reflect on that intention and that design. Negativism of itself reflects back on immediate activity in its setting and expresses a position and a perspective: an utterance is opening. The person expressing negativism has a history of being positioned in this activity setting, institution and culture; with this history of being comes a history of feeling. Negativism acts out the feeling of social being.

In a pedagogic situation, the utterance that is opening in an act of negativism may reflect on the teacher, because the teacher is historically and actually constituted in most school settings as the person who empowers agency. A power of agency is being claimed from the person who is believed to have the most power to grant agency. However, the negativism does not necessarily express that the teacher is the problem; instead it positions the teacher as the potential solver of the problem. What is being uttered as negativism is an opening even though it may be expressed in terms of cause and blame. What is being uttered is also, in the same instant, designed and expressed as a potential opening to others in the immediate setting and it may be that some of these people are the cause of the problem, or it may not. The opening is a potential door in utterance and being.

There are many pedagogic moves made in any classroom and we need to study them. I have only described some of those that I have thought about, based on my own experience, observation and reflection. It is possible that some of the moves I have described may be double moves in that they keep the specific utterance open for collective and personal exploration through reflection of what in the social world is happening. Some problems seem to change and become more surmountable when potential is released through pedagogic moves for taking up agential positions and voices that allow us to work together on our understanding. It remains the case that what we learn to do for ourselves must first be available to us from our immediate social world and setting. It remains the case that such availability is not enough simply as an opportunity and needs assistance in becoming appropriated and practised and experienced and uttered and storied so successfully that we can reclaim that understanding. We most need help to feel our way forward when dark times fall in our lives.

The Czech poet, Miroslav Holub (1923-1998), made a poem that I have loved to teach all my teaching life. It is called, ‘The Door’ (Holub, 1987, 46). It starts:

Go and open the door.

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